

Claims

- [c1] 1. A method for use with mail pieces and with a purchaser having an identity, the method comprising the steps of:
requiring, as a precondition of purchasing at least one postal indicium, receipt of first information indicative of the purchaser's identity,
deriving second information functionally from said first information;
printing said second information upon the at least one postal indicium;
receiving an addressed mail piece with the at least one postal indicium into the mail; and
delivering the addressed mail piece.
- [c2] 2. The method of claim 1 wherein the postal indicium is an adhesive postage stamp.
- [c3] 3. The method of claim 1 wherein the postal indicium is a meter strip.
- [c4] 4. The method of claim 1 wherein the postal indicium is printed on an envelope.
- [c5] 5. The method of claim 1 wherein the postal indicium is printed on a post card.
- [c6] 6. The method of claim 1 wherein the second information is an invisibly printed bar code.
- [c7] 7. The method of claim 1 wherein the second information is a visibly printed bar code.
- [c8] 8. The method of claim 1 wherein the second information is a human-readable message.
- [c9] 9. The method of claim 1 further characterized in that the number of postal indicia comprise a plurality, and wherein the printing, receiving, and delivering steps are carried out with respect to each of the plurality of indicia.
- [c10] 10. A method for use with purchased postal indicia, with mail pieces and with a purchaser having an identity, the method comprising the steps of:
requiring, as a precondition of receiving at least one addressed mail piece with a postal indicium into the mail, that the postal indicium bear information

indicative of the identity of the purchaser;
receiving the at least one addressed mail piece with the postal indicium into the
mail; and
delivering the at least one addressed mail piece.

- [c11] 11. The method of claim 10 wherein the postal indicium is an adhesive postage stamp.
- [c12] 12. The method of claim 10 wherein the postal indicium is a meter strip.
- [c13] 13. The method of claim 10 wherein the postal indicium is printed on an envelope.
- [c14] 14. The method of claim 10 wherein the postal indicium is printed on a post card.
- [c15] 15. The method of claim 10 wherein the second information is an invisibly printed bar code.
- [c16] 16. The method of claim 10 wherein the second information is a visibly printed bar code.
- [c17] 17. The method of claim 10 wherein the second information is a human-readable message.
- [c18] 18. The method of claim 10 further characterized in that the number of addressed mail pieces comprise a plurality, and wherein the printing, receiving, and delivering steps are carried out with respect to each of the plurality of addressed mail pieces.
- [c19] 19. The method of claim 10 further characterized in that the information indicative of the identity of the purchaser is cryptographically signed, the precondition further characterized as requiring successful checking of the cryptographic signature.
- [c20] 20. A method for use with purchased postal indicia, with mail pieces and with a purchaser having an identity, the method comprising the steps of:
requiring, as a precondition of delivering at least one addressed mail piece with

a postal indicium, that the postal indicium bear information indicative of the identity of the purchaser;
receiving the at least one addressed mail piece with the postal indicium into the mail; and
~~delivering the at least one addressed mail piece.~~

- [c21] 21. The method of claim 20 wherein the postal indicium is an adhesive postage stamp.
- [c22] 22. The method of claim 20 wherein the postal indicium is a meter strip.
- [c23] 23. The method of claim 20 wherein the postal indicium is printed on an envelope.
- [c24] 24. The method of claim 20 wherein the postal indicium is printed on a post card.
- [c25] 25. The method of claim 20 wherein the second information is an invisibly printed bar code.
- [c26] 26. The method of claim 20 wherein the second information is a visibly printed bar code.
- [c27] The method of claim 20 wherein the second information is a human-readable message.
- [c28] 28. The method of claim 20 further characterized in that the number of addressed mail pieces comprise a plurality, and wherein the printing, receiving, and delivering steps are carried out with respect to each of the plurality of addressed mail pieces.
- [c29] 29. The method of claim 20 further characterized in that the information indicative of the identity of the purchaser is cryptographically signed, the precondition further characterized as requiring successful checking of the cryptographic signature.
- [c30] 30. A method for use with mail pieces and with a recipient possessing a list of expected senders, and with a sender having an identity, the method comprising

the steps of:

receiving a delivered mail piece bearing a postal indicium, the postal indicium bearing information indicative of the identity of the sender;
reading the information indicative of the identity of the sender; and
determining whether the sender whose identity is indicated by the information is on the list of expected senders.

- [c31] 31. The method of claim 30 further characterized in that the information indicative of the identity of the sender that is borne in the postal indicium is cryptographically signed, and further characterized in that the reading step further comprises checking the cryptographic signature.
- [c32] 32. The method of claim 30 comprising the additional step, performed in the event of the sender not being on the list of expected senders, of inspecting the delivered mail piece.
- [c33] 33. An adhesive postal indicium comprising:
information indicative of a postage amount printed by a first process;
information indicative of a country printed by the first process; and
cryptographically signed information indicative of an identity of a purchaser of the adhesive postal indicium;
the cryptographically signed information printed by a different process than the first process.
- [c34] 34. A plurality of adhesive postal indicia, each postal indicium comprising:
information indicative of a postage amount printed by a first process;
information indicative of a country printed by the first process; and
cryptographically signed information indicative of an identity of a purchaser of the adhesive postal indicia;
the cryptographically signed information printed by a different process than the first process.
- [c35] 35. Printing apparatus comprising:
a plurality of adhesive postal indicia, each postal indicium comprising
information indicative of a postage amount and information indicative of a

country, each postal indicium free of any cryptographically signed information indicative of an identity of a purchaser of the postal indicia; and a printer adapted to print upon the plurality of adhesive postal indicia cryptographically signed information indicative of an identity of a purchaser of the adhesive postal indicia.

- [c36] 36. A method for use with printing apparatus comprising a plurality of adhesive postal indicia, each postal indicium comprising information indicative of a postage amount and information indicative of a country, each postal indicium free of any cryptographically signed information indicative of an identity of a purchaser of the postal indicia, and a printer adapted to print upon the plurality of adhesive postal indicia, the steps of:
receiving information indicative of an identity of a purchaser of the adhesive postal indicia;
cryptographically signing the information indicative of the identity of the purchaser of the adhesive postal indicia;
printing upon the adhesive postal indicia, by means of the printer, information indicative of the cryptographically signed information.

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